

TESTIMONY OF JOSEPH DOYLE
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My name is Joseph Doyle. I have lived in Virginia City for the past 35 years.

It has been 15 years since the MHC was created and began managing historic properties and artifacts located in Virginia City and Nevada City that were previously owned by Charles and Sue Bovey. All of those properties now belong to all of the people of Montana, a fact that certain local residents don't really accept.

There is enormously strong sentiment among about half the residents of Virginia City that the state-owned properties there should be maintained as a tribute to the Boveys, rather than as a memorial and history of the 19th century pioneers who found the gold, built the town, hung the sheriff, and brought civilization to Southwest Montana.

The MHC has yet to take a clear stance that the purpose of the 1997 legislation authorizing purchase of the Bovey artifacts was to preserve the history and memory of those pioneers, not to enshrine the Bovey family and its approach to exhibiting or maintaining the collection. The MHC has, in my judgment, been inexcusably timid with respect to this issue. As a consequence they have made far less than 15 years of progress in bringing good management techniques to the curation, exhibition, maintenance and marketing of the most remarkable collection of Gold Rush era history in the country.

So I believe that continued legislative oversight of the MHC is imperative. There is still far too much deference to the sentiment that things must be done as they were from 1947 to 1997, rather than a clear focus on showing the world what life was like in gold mining Montana from 1865 to 1927.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.